

# Minute on the Corporate Support of Individual Ministries

Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting

Approved in Business Meeting on October 6, 2013

*Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the birds of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, some an hundred. (Mark 4: 3-9)*

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OVER THE YEARS, as Fresh Pond Meeting has grown into a sense of its own identity, Friends have often expressed the expectation that some calling or cause would emerge to gather and focus our spiritual energy, leading us corporately into some service to the world. It now seems that this period of longing and waiting has been, in fact, preparing the ground from which new ministries might spring.

Today, we find a number of individuals doing spirit-led work outside the Meeting, carrying their witness into the wider world. We see Fresh Pond Friends working in prisons, engaging in anti-bullying and racism work, immigration work and other forms of teaching and spiritual nurture. We feel a clear relationship between these activities and the life of the Meeting. Friends thus engaged tell us that their actions arise from their faith, which is nourished by the Meeting, and that they feel sustained by the Meeting. Many Friends at Fresh Pond have support committees that help them discern where and how they are led. These committees are recognized as grounding, not only for those they support, but for those who offer support, as well. The presence in our midst of Friends who are responding to God's call brings vitality to the faith of our community, and a greater awareness that all of us are called into relationship with God.

We have also come to see that this dynamic sharing of our faith and leadings is evidence of the corporate witness we have longed for.

Friends at Fresh Pond Meeting rejoice in the vibrant manifestations of spirit among us, and acknowledge the importance of every member of the community in forming the good ground, upon which the seeds of ministry spring up, and increase, and bear fruit. We are eager to open ourselves more fully to God's abundant love and to discover how we can continue to share that love with the world around us.

***In practice***, our support for emerging ministries often follows a pattern:

It is not unusual for the first naming of a gift to come from a fellow member of the Meeting, acting in this instance as Elder.

A Friend who is experiencing a leading or a developing gift often asks for a clearness

committee, to help explore the nature and truth of the leading.

If the leading appears to be sustained, the Friend may ask for an on-going support committee which will help the Friend with discernment as the leading evolves, and will provide spiritual support.

If or when it is useful to the Friend to have a minute of support from the Meeting, the support committee drafts such a minute, submitting it to Ministry and Worship for their consideration. If Friends find unity, the minute will be forwarded to Business Meeting for further consideration. While some minutes may have practical benefit (travel minute, minute of Ecclesiastical endorsement) the recognition itself is often an important step on the Friend's spiritual journey.

At such point as the Friend and his/her support committee find the leading or a ministry requires practical support, Fresh Pond Meeting remains open to considering if and how we can support the leading including, on occasion, providing financial support as way opens, and shepherding funds raised to support the work. While discernment about spiritual support will come through Ministry and Worship, evaluation of our ability to provide or oversee financial support is considered by Administration and Stewardship. Recommendations will come to Business Meeting for consideration.

Friends receiving support from the Meeting are expected to engage with their support committees in discerning the appropriate level of accountability to the Meeting. While the meeting may have the privilege of witnessing various manifestations of a leading (e.g. vocal ministry, youth work, etc.), accountability often takes the form of reports to the meeting. Regular reports, are a useful reflection for the Friend undertaking a ministry, and serve to keep the wider meeting engaged and informed. The report may also be a time for the Meeting to recognize, acknowledge, and consider more deeply the mutuality between the Meeting and the Ministry.

Throughout this process the Meeting has a responsibility to name and support the ministry, and to regularly consider the on-going truth of the leading. When the leading changes, (as it likely will), the Friend, with their support committee, will undertake discernment on how to proceed with continuing care of the Friend's leading or gift. This may include acknowledgment that the leading has been withdrawn, or that a fallow period for rest and reflection by this Friend and the support committee is rightly ordered. The Friend, in turn, takes neither the gift nor the Meeting's support for granted, and is encouraged to share the experience of following God's leading generously since these experiences may be of great value to other Friends.